

GOETHE AND FRANCE

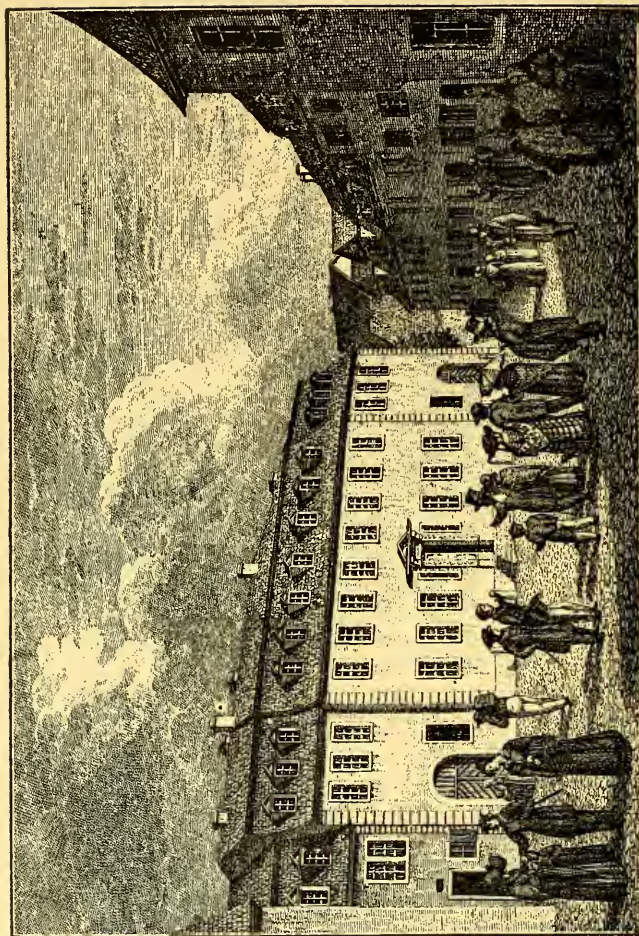
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CRITICS and biographers have generally agreed that, while Goethe owed much to French literature and thought, French culture owes even more to Goethe. Let us examine first the debit side of his account. From the formative years when the lad prattled in French to his governess and acquaintances at Frankfort, to the day shortly before his death when a volume of Balzac was the last book scanned by those wearied eyes, Goethe was constantly, in spirit at least, crossing the frontier. In his drama and fiction, more particularly in his reminiscences and *Conversations*, references to things French abound. "Of all Germans," says M. Loiseau, "he is the one who has known us the most completely." His knowledge grew partly through French contacts, but more continuously through his vast reading, which explored every fertile field, speculative or imaginative, that could be found beyond the Rhine.

In the flesh Goethe actually crossed that border only twice—the year 1770-71, which he spent as a student at Strasbourg, the year 1792, when he followed the Valmy campaign in the train of the allied armies. From the Gallic standpoint, neither of these sojourns was very productive. Nor did Goethe ever visit Paris, as Napoleon invited him to do. But in many forms and through diverse personalities, Paris came to him.

It came first in dramatic form, when at Frankfort or Leipsic the youth saw or read numerous plays, especially by the classical French masters. Then it came in the form of rococo graces and gallantries, at a period when every German kinglet still patterned his court after the manner of Versailles and tried to swing the French language after the manner of Voltaire. Goethe, too, had his phase of Voltairomania crossed with *la volupté*, evidenced by witty madrigal or amorous pastoral. But at Strasbourg he turned from all this, turned in fact against the conventional French influence as well as against the French residents in the town; and soon he proceeded to mix Herderism with Rousseauism at the height of the "Sturm-und-Drang Periode." In his middle period, all this vanished, to yield place to a firmer interest in French drama and scientific



Warum stehen sie davor?
Ich nicht Thüre da und Thor

Können sie getroffen herein
Würden wohl empfangen seyn
Goethe 1782 & 8

GOETHE'S HOUSE IN WEIMAR

thought. Later on, the Revolution and Napoleon claim his interest, and still later the advent of romanticism. Finally, his Protean and almost universal mind is able to sympathize or wrestle with nearly every manifestation of the French *Zeitgeist*. This is particularly true of his later years, when a stream of pilgrims kept the aging Goethe in closer touch with contemporary France.

For Paris also came to him in the guise of illustrious visitors. Among the earliest of these (1803) was Madame de Staël, whose loquacity and hero-worship rather overwhelmed Goethe. (Even such vigorous types as Byron and Napoleon had been overborne by the personality of this imperious lady). But Goethe did justice to the distinction of her writings and particularly to the way in which she promoted the literature of the new Germany in her own country. The conversation of her lover, Benjamin Constant, was appreciated at Weimar, where Goethe profited from his knowledge of contemporary politics. Even under the old régime, the German sage had shown his ability to converse easily (and to their mutual benefit) with sprightly abbés or learned archaeologists from across the Rhine. Now under Napoleon, he exchanges views with Marshalls and diplomats, such as Daru and Denon, with the engaging Prince de Ligne and the subtle Talleyrand himself. Under the Restoration, Victor Cousin introduced him to the new philosophical and historical school at the Sorbonne, while J.-J. Ampère, a very sympathetic visitor, gave him an abiding interest in *Le Globe*, the foremost of critical journals and the herald of romanticism. The sculptor, David d'Angers, initiated Goethe into romantic art, while completing the majestic bust of him now found in the ex-ducal library at Weimar.

But of all living contacts, the encounter with Napoleon did most for the poet. The two "men of destiny," the first minds of their age, had much in common—notably a strong sense of order and of realities. Therefore, when they met at Erfurt in 1808, Napoleon's first exclamation in the presence of Goethe was: "Voilà un homme!" He spoke to him at length about literature, criticizing Voltaire's *Mahomet* (which Goethe had translated), but revealing the deep impression made upon him by the insidious *Werther*. The Emperor constantly referred matters to the writer's opinion: "Qu'en pense M. Göt?" Later the two met again at Weimar. Napoleon was pleased to honor the poet and to bear lightly on the duchy

because of its famous son. The chief effect on Goethe was to leave him with an intense interest in the later fortunes of the Emperor, even after his banishment to Saint Helena. The meditative German considered that Bonaparte was legitimately all-powerful, by human, if not by divine right; and the poet's own power seems to have increased, as by some moral transfusion, after the memorable interviews.

More than any of his contemporaries, Goethe had an extensive and profound knowledge of French literature. Quite early in his youth he became acquainted with the Renaissance writers, of whom he preferred Montaigne for the intimate way in which he mirrored mankind. In the seventeenth century, he knew all the chief authors with the curious exception of the moralists, as well as many of the *savants*. His admiration for the great classical dramatists, barring Corneille, remained constant throughout his life. He preferred the naturalness, the psychological penetration of Racine, or the social types of Molière, whom he was always re-reading. He considered *Tartuffe* the best serious comedy ever written. The despotic Boileau held his allegiance for a short time only. He drew what he needed from the philosophy of Descartes and from the erudition of Bayle.

The eighteenth-century *philosophes* were for long Goethe's chief masters and guides. One biographer states that, in his connection with Karl August of Weimar, the poet even dreamed of "playing the latter-day Voltaire and installing Rousseau's ideas into a real live prince." Be that as it may, he once told Eckermann that the latter "could not imagine the ascendancy which Voltaire and his great contemporaries had in the time of my youth, how notably they influenced my own adolescence—and what efforts were needed to free myself and use my own wings." We have glimpsed him under the spell of Voltaire; but Lessing made him waver in his discipleship as far as dramatic principles are concerned; and Herder completed his apostasy by making him believe that Voltairianism was *passé*. Yet while caring little for the scepticism or the character of the sage of Ferney, Goethe never denied his great talent nor quite gave up translating and staging his plays.

Rousseau he had known since Leipsic days; yet it was rather at Strasbourg, in the height of Storm and Stress, that he became intoxicated with nature-worship, with sentiment and individualism à la Jean-Jacques. Such tumults are visible in *Götz von Ber-*

lichingen and other productions of that period. In his later life, allusions to Rousseau are rare.

Goethe's admiration for Diderot is more sustained, for they had fundamentally more in common—especially an enthusiasm for the realities of Nature and for scientific investigation. While averse to too much materializing or too much moralizing in art, Goethe praised the tale of *Jacques le fataliste* and translated, as is well known, the dialogue of *Le Neveu de Rameau*. Indeed, he discovered and revealed this dialogue, along with other works by its author. For if it was France, as Barbey d'Aurevilly claims, who "Europeanized Goethe," it was Goethe who tried to Europeanize Diderot. Such was the native kinship between these two spirits, because of their joint kinship to the Earth-Spirit.

Among other eighteenth-century thinkers, Buffon could not fail to offer much to a student of natural history; Montesquieu's historical insight is praised; d'Holbach is condemned for his narrow materialism; numerous scientific works are read and used. The dramatists are inevitably given a large place in Goethe's judgments, for he staged certain of their works as director of the Weimar theater. Already at Frankfort he had become interested in Marivaux and Destouches, as later in Beaumarchais. He also had various opportunities to see the tragedies of Voltaire and the elder Cr billon. The French players in the train of Napoleon, with the great Talma at their head, won the poet's enthusiastic approval.

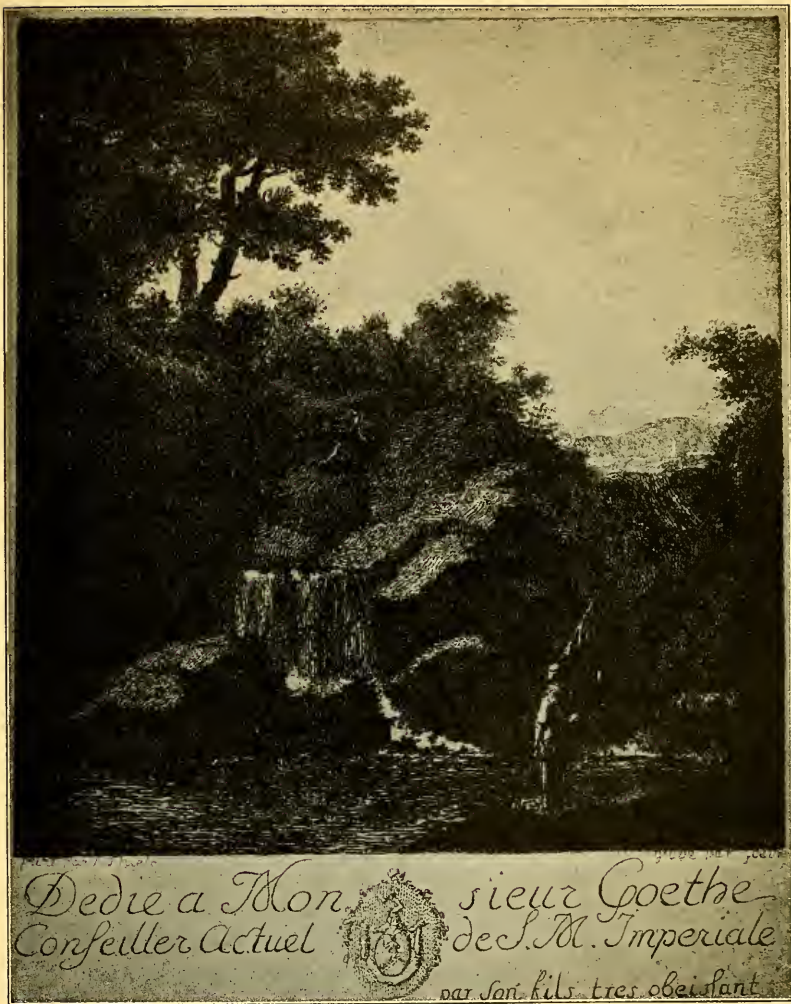
When it comes to early nineteenth-century literature, Goethe's readings are even more omnivorous and are naturally less discriminating, since he had not the perspective which time gives. He is particularly attentive to the novelties offered by the romantic writers, whether in the domains of drama, poetry, or fiction. He reads the critical works of Madame de Sta l and her successors as well as various critical and political journals—the former with assiduity. He is keen on history, geography, travel, together with scientific works, of course. He develops a taste for personal memoirs, especially those concerning the Revolution and the Empire. Not merely does he "keep up" with the new productions; he is now in the full current of that intellectual ubiquity, that universality of interest in French culture which has been declared to be unparalleled in his age.

Of course he had his preferences. He had expressed approval of Madame de Staël's early works before their meeting. *Corinne* pleased him greatly. In spite of some reserves regarding *De l'Allemagne*, he appreciated the efforts which the authoress had taken to spread abroad a comprehension of German writers; she was his younger sister in the endeavor to establish a *Weltliteratur*, a true Republic of Letters. He was less interested in the "rhetoricopolitical" Chateaubriand.

In the full tide of French romanticism, Goethe preserves an attitude of critical detachment which, in some respects, anticipates that of posterity. On the whole he felt much as he felt about the German movement: "The classical is the wholesome and the romantic is the unwholesome." He is disposed to welcome the semi-romanticism of Delavigne and of Béranger—extolling the latter as the best of song-writers, but objecting when he becomes addicted to "démésure." Now Hugo seemed excessive a good part of the time; so Goethe finds *Hernani* "absurd," considers *Les Orientales* too highly charged with exaggerations and antitheses, and dwells on the distasteful *Notre-Dame de Paris* as symptomatic of "that literature of despair, from which everything true and artistic is being banished." Perhaps Goethe is exaggerating in the other direction. At any rate, the novel is viewed as deplorably false to life, for all its picturesqueness. Admitting that Hugo has renovated French poetry through his imagination and his virtuosity, he is a leader of that noisy and wild-haired type of romanticism which the elderly Goethe could not abide.

He prefers Mérimée, who had some sense; and so had Stendhal, notably the sense of psychological penetration. *La Peau de Chagrin*—the only fictional masterpiece by Balzac which appeared before Goethe's death—is well characterized *a propos* of its singular medley of elements. With the exception of Hugo, the romantic poets do not seem to have been well known to Goethe; he reads widely in the romantic drama, but is often censorious.

The philosophers and thinkers were more in his line. Since he had liked Cousin personally, he spoke too favorably of his penetration and profundity. Together with Cousin, Goethe appreciated the even more "excellent" Guizot. The social doctrine of the Comte de Saint-Simon attracted his interest, though he believed it fundamentally unsound. He admired and was grateful to Ampère, who



Dedie a Mon sieur Goethe
Conseiller Actuel de S. M. Imperiale
par son fils tres obeissant

AN ETCHING BY GOETHE

had understood him, and to Gérard de Nerval, who had adequately translated *Faust*.

These are significant samples, but they are far from being all the French contemporary writers whom Goethe read and considered. One day he would dip lengthily into *Le Globe*; on another he would scourge himself into ploughing through Hugo's latest novel. Bielschowsky pictures him as turning one morning, perhaps, from the debates of the Chamber of Deputies to the most recent life of Napoleon, not forgetting to scan an essay by Villemain before sunset. Thus, with respect to France in particular, Eckermann's saying regarding his master was fulfilled: "He desires always to be advancing, always to be learning!"

A few pages by Loiseau give a chronological summary of this topic. As a lad at Frankfort, Goethe is much Gallicized, particularly in matters dramatic. At Leipsic, he is still half bound, half free. From 1771 to 1775, comes a period of would-be emancipation, even of hostility to French culture. Yet Reynaud has shown that much of his production is still influenced by the French—"the free thought of the Encyclopedists, the caustic manner of Voltaire, the sentimental exaltation of Rousseau" appear in the dramas of this period and even in *Werther*. The Weimar sojourn, with its partial classicism and its relative serenity, the trip into Italy, attach him more to the French classical masters, while through Grimm's "Correspondence," he becomes better acquainted with Diderot. We may add that as a reflective judge of romanticism, his verdicts are still to be reckoned with. If he views the French movement on the whole as less noxious than the German, if he is aware of the fine spirit of youth animating for instance the coterie of *Le Globe*, yet he insists that as a group the romanticists did not work hard enough (another critic said they "did not know enough," and I think Goethe would have agreed with that.) Furthermore, they have at times a taste for the fantastic, the crude, the horrible.... which the author of the *Walpurgisnacht* had left behind. At most, Goethe concedes that the school has achieved a desirable liberation in form and that it furnishes a greater richness of material than had hitherto been known.

One noted scholar declares that the story will never be fully told of what Goethe owes to France; and another characterizes the subject as one of the largest that could be undertaken. Here,

evidently, we can do no more than brush the surface and indicate the avenues of approach, so far as partial investigations have opened them to our view. In addition to points already mentioned in passing, the following signs of French influence may be predicated.

In the political field, the Revolution left a deep and, on the whole, an unfavorable impression upon Goethe's mind. He distrusted the Jacobins and disbelieved in violent upheavals; while sympathizing with the woes of the common people, he did not think them fit to rule and leaned rather to the constitutional hierarchies. In his last years, he attained to an attitude of comparative detachment and admitted that the uprising of the people was justified and inevitable. But earlier works, especially minor or fragmentary plays, are counter-Revolutionary. Among these are *Der Bürgergeneral*, *Die Aufgeregten* (unfinished), and *Die Natürliche Tochter*, which is highly considered. But in none of these efforts was Goethe successful in establishing an adequate historical background or in philosophizing the Revolution. This in spite of the fact that he used a number of French memoirs on the subject.

Such reactions will account in part for the welcome which Goethe extended to Napoleon, as the Titan who at least endeavored to bring some order out of chaos.

In the domain of literature, let us note first that the poet had a thorough-going knowledge of the French language. Occasionally he wrote in French, and more frequently he translated, for his own use, fragments of various masterpieces. As a rule, his debt to French authors is rarely a matter of close or formal imitation; although the French classics helped give him a sense of form, yet taking the literature as a whole, he is less concerned with its surface than with its substance; he transmutes the latter into terms of his own individuality and message.

To begin with his youth, it has been hinted above that before his conversion to folk-poetry, Goethe was not unaffected by the vogue of the rococo. Early Anacreontic verses and songs echo the Gallic "poésie légère," and the fashionable taste of the epoch seduced him into the artificial pastoral vein. Indeed, his catholic interest in the types of drama beyond the Rhine even led him to an indulgence in several operettas, while *Clavigo*, so Gallic in its structure, is for once closely based on an episode in the *Memoirs* of Beaumarchais.

During the period of Storm and Stress, and for a while thereafter, Rousseau was undeniably a source of inspiration for Goethe. Certain ideas, political or pedagogical, in *Götz von Berlichingen* bring a whiff of Rousseauism. More evidently, *Werther* and *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* remind us in their structure of Jean-Jacques' methods, though the latter has more obvious links with the *Histoire comique* of Scarron. *Werther* in particular, by Goethe's own admission, has parallels with *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. An actual influence has been asserted, with regard to the common epistolary form, the confessional content, the atmosphere of "Nature" and the pathetic fallacy in its use, the declamatory language, and such themes as the argument for suicide. But it is a free rather than a close imitation. As far down as the *Wanderjahre*, certain elements in Rousseauistic pedagogy—the emphasis on a "natural," yet individualistic education, the attention paid to concrete objects—tend to recur in Goethe. It has been well said that whereas Rousseau's feeling towards Nature becomes religious adoration, we find rather philosophic contemplation in the author of *Faust*. The latter's general reaction against Jean-Jacques set in fairly early and continued for many years.

Turning back to the drama, we must recognize that this was the field in which Goethe was most constantly influenced by French originals and that his managership of the Weimar theater served to maintain his early interests in this direction.

The influence of Molière, that other "servant of reality," seems to be generally pervasive. The figure of Tasso has striking analogies with that of Alceste, while *Tartuffe* probably appears elsewhere, and the Frenchman's ideas on the theater were remembered in *Wilhelm Meister*. More definitely, the French classical tragedy underlies the classical masterpiece of *Iphigenie*. Here the Greek background is supplemented notably by the treatment of Racine among several others. The Racinian nobility, his purity and sentiment, constitute the ideal towards which Goethe strove. In *Tasso*, too, the Frenchman's technique, his preoccupation with the analysis of passion, are the dominant elements. Goethe cared more deeply for Racine than for any other French author. This did not prevent him, in minor plays, from falling back on material furnished by Voltaire.

Among his later works, the *Wanderjahre* contains several echoes

of things French, especially with reference to the social system known as Saint-Simonism. Goethe's relations to contemporary French science, for example to Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, offer, it is held, more in the way of coincidences and correlations than evidence of actual discipleship. Did he again have Rousseau in mind, the Rousseau of the *Confessions*, during the composition of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*? The question may be submitted. Here as in other cases we must follow M. Loiseau's caution in not exaggerating the French influence, which, if considerable, scarcely affected Goethe's original way of transforming alien material into his own *bien*. "La France a agi sur lui plus par son esprit que par ses formes." The same critic (pp. 350-51) thus excellently summarizes Goethe's debt to France:

From our old authors [of the Renaissance] he took the taste for a certain naturalness and naïveté—a taste which Rousseau confirmed in him. Our theater developed precociously his innate dramatic gifts. Racine first gave him the sense of classical tragedy, with its harmonious lines and its delicate psychology. In the school of Molière, Goethe learned to scrutinize acutely the twists and quirks in human nature. Our eighteenth-century drama turned him rather towards contemporary life and its problems. Diderot's criticism of the stage helped to form Goethe's. Rousseau's doctrine gave him a genuine and passionate cult for Nature, and increased his tendency towards individualism and the reign of sentiment. From Voltaire he learned to express himself alertly and incisively and gathered those seeds of revolt against traditional obscurantism which sprouted in his youth only. The speculations of our Encyclopedists stimulated his thought, though rather in a reactionary manner. Similarly, acquaintance with romanticism served to reinforce his later classical bent—a bent towards a just proportion and order. Even our budding socialism interested him, while our scientific production at least accompanied his own.

To this degree and in these directions one may properly speak of a considerable French influence upon Goethe.

There is another aspect of what Professor Baldensperger calls "cette grande chose intellectuelle: Goethe et la France." I refer to the second half of our subject, namely, what French writers owe to Goethe. Here indeed the field is so extensive, the variety of harvest so abundant that we can only indicate the most fertile results of Goethe-culture, following in the main Baldensperger's

analysis. It should be said at once that the great German found in France no such outstanding interpreter as Carlyle in England or Emerson in America. It was more a question of "successive explorations" than of a sudden revelation or discovery.

For long Goethe was known first as "the author of *Werther*," then as "the author of *Faust*." In the former capacity, he was differently valued by the intellectuals and by the more sensitive reading public. The critics of the press were for some time not too favorably disposed towards *Werther*, objecting to the declamatory style, to weaknesses in the plot and personages. But the middle-class public, especially the women and yearning youths were attracted by the melancholy tale. Trained by Rousseau, they could appreciate sentiment swathed in Nature. The youthful Bonaparte, for instance, read the work seven times. Soon these ardent souls came to approve also the leaven of social revolt contained in *Werther*. Fictional imitations multiplied; fifteen mediocre translations were made in the last quarter of the eighteenth century; and it is said that as a consequence of the melancholy end of the hero, the cracking of pistol-shots resounded in rapid fire over France as well as Germany.

Madame de Staël was one of the most deeply affected. "*Werther*," she declared, "made an epoch in my life," and she considered it, of all German works to date, the most important "par excellence." Its anti-social tendency, its depiction of passion which judges itself without being able to restrain itself, impressed her profoundly; these qualities were not without effect on her own *Delphine*.

Thus, while *Iphigenie* and even *Wilhelm Meister* awakened few echoes, *Werther* passed from the bourgeois into aristocratic circles. In spite of the warnings of the godly, the vogue of the tale among the rising generation was augmented by the trepidations of the Revolution and of the Consulate. Chateaubriand tries to Christianize *Werther* in his *René*, yet recognizes an essential kinship between the two errant types. It is amusing today to read the tales of such an enthusiast as Nodier: *Les Proscrits*, where naïve and stricken people wander over the landscape, with *Werther* alternately in their pockets or on their lips; *Le Peintre de Salzbourg*, recopying the Wertherian triangle, though with more blurred outlines.

Later on, at any rate, like a hero of Nodier's, Lamartine also wandered among the hills with the precious volume, his heart at-

tuned to its insidious sadness. True that its influence henceforth is hard to disentangle from that of its friendly enemies—*René*, *Oberman*, and the like. The early fiction of Sainte-Beuve, the *Confession* of Musset reveal more distinctively Wertherean soul-states. Finally, around 1830 the book became crystallized as a classic, hence appreciably *hors concours*—and place was made for “the author of *Faust*.”

Yet it is doubtful if his dramas, eclectic or abstruse, were ever so popular as those of Schiller with the romantic leaders. They needed Goethe's name (which they occasionally took in vain) to champion their cause. With all her enthusiasm for his metaphysical power, Madame de Staël judged that his comprehensive genius overflowed the limits of the theater. For example, the French public must have opened a bewildered gaze upon the fifty-six changes of scene in *Götz*, although this truly “romantic” hurly-burly came nearest to exercising a definite influence upon the French *drame*. But on the whole Goethe's plays furnished impulses for the romantic revolt rather than models suitable for the new theater beyond the Rhine.

Only the First Part of *Faust* could have been known to Frenchmen during this period. What did the romanticists admire in the poem? To begin with, they were disconcerted either by its rambling dramatic form or by its somewhat cloudy metaphysics. Even Madame de Staël (here as elsewhere the initiator), though “astonished” and overcome by the power of this “*cauchemar de l'esprit*,” summarizes the work as “an arresting image of intellectual chaos.” Her friend, Constant, gibes at *Faust*, while more hide-bound people consider it an example of the so-called “frantic” school of poetry. Only independent minds—Nodier, the younger Ampère, Quinet—were frankly favorable. The public bluntly turns its back on all metaphysical suggestions and responds to the more obvious appeal of the diabolical Mephisto or the angelic Margaret.

Striking lithographs of the devil are executed by the masterly Delacroix and by the talented Tony Johannot. While Gérard de Nerval translates the work in a way to make it “le *Faust* des poètes,” the theaters of the boulevards melodramatize and denaturalize the original, with particular attention to the rôle of Mephistopheles. Berlioz begins his musical versions, which accentuate the fantastic and the sinister. On the other hand, the “sorrow-

ful charm of Gretchen" appeals to all. For poets and artists she becomes the type of blond and candid Teutonic ingénues. Thus Musset and Gautier sing of her; thus Ary Scheffer and others depict her at the spinning-wheel or leaving the church. When Gretchen was turned into Marguerite, she acquired a halo that was practically an *article de Paris*—and this in spite of certain realistic protests by Stendhal and Dumas *filis*.

It was too soon for most people to penetrate into the deeper meaning of the poem. The mystical Quinet, in his *Ahasvérus*, adapts an old legend in the Goethean manner, and there are numerous resemblances between the two treatments. George Sand contains certain reminiscences of Goethe, while generally the feverish or Titanic desires of Faust awaken responsive echoes among the poets. That much in the way of ideas they can understand and sympathize with. The more symbolic and abstruse values must wait for another generation.

Somewhat the same limitations apply to the French romanticists' appreciation of Goethe as lyric poet, with this difference—that they were ready to meet him not only on sentimental but also on supernatural ground. The way had been well paved for the reception of the Northern Mystic. Consequently, a considerable vogue is attained by the *Erkönig* above all, as well as by *The Bride of Corinth* and by *The God and the Bayadere*. Translations or imitations of these are fairly numerous and are often well done. By the side of such *Balladen und Romanzen*, a few *Lieder* are equally honored—especially the *King of Thule*, plucked from *Faust* as the song of Mignon was plucked from *Wilhelm Meister*. Operatic themes are also found in the above. The *Erkönig* becomes almost a symbol because together with Bürger's *Lenore* and others it typifies for French imitators the wild ride, the *chevauchée* amid supernatural elements. Hugo's *Mazeppa* would be a case in point. Fantastic or picturesque inspirations were thus culled by the romanticists from Goethe's verse; but of his heights and depths as a lyrist they knew little or nothing.

While the French comprehension of Goethe around 1830 was not usually profound and was connected with the more obvious features of his work, his renown had gradually attained almost majestic proportions. His name was too intimately linked with the romantic battle in France not to receive numerous plaudits, how-

ever misdirected. The visitors to Weimar, notably Ampère and Saint-Marc Girardin, had brought back material for an extensive pedestal. Apostrophized and venerated while still living, Goethe in his death evoked numerous tributes—an ode by Barbier, a special representation of *Méphistophélès*, a chorus of praise from the press. He is termed "King of poets," the great figure of his age as Voltaire was before him. "Since the death of Goethe," said Hugo, "German thought has retreated into the shadow." The esteem of Deschamps, of Gautier and Delacroix, together with that of a dozen others, shows how Goethe *malgré lui* was placed in the vanguard of the romantic movement. It is only when this partisan view has faded out that his productions, especially the dramas mentioned above, come to be more adequately and truly rated. In the meantime, let us glance at the influence of his fiction, subsequent to *Werther*, in French opinion and practice.

Save for the figure and the song of Mignon, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* was for long little appreciated in France. The book was considered too lengthy and deficient both in plot and character interest. But Mignon herself led to the fabrication of other such heroines, notably the Esmeralda of Hugo. "Kennst du das Land" was translated many times, was often recalled by French poets, and received its best-known form in the opera of *Mignon* by Ambroise Thomas (1866). This success scarcely profited *Wilhelm Meister* as a whole. George Sand, to be sure, in *Consuelo*, and Gautier, in *Le Capitaine Fracasse*, offer analogies which in some respects seem to be imitations of the German tale.

Neither was *Elective Affinities* a general success. The fact that Stendhal was almost its only admirer in the romantic era is significant; for Stendhal represents an analytical approach the habit of which had to become more widely spread before the novel could at all win its way. So later in the century we find Dumas fils, Edouard Rod, and especially Paul Bourget lending their ears to the psychological or scientific features of the *Wahlverwandschaften*.

We cannot here go adequately into the effects on French thought of Goethe's science and his philosophy. Suffice it to say, with regard to the former, that Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire admired the *Metamorphosis of Plants*, which he introduced to the French Academy. The two men had similar views about the "synthetic" treatment of Nature, which consists, according to both, of one original sub-

stance; it is interesting to note that Balzac, in the *Avant-Propos de la Comédie humaine*, groups together as exponents of this theory the names of Goethe and of Saint-Hilaire.

Without the prestige of Goethe, says one critic, German metaphysical ideas would never have taken hold in France. How firmly and deeply they took hold is still a question. Victor Cousin and other romantic idealists, full of admiration for Goethe's pantheistic monism, yet did not realize its full implications; they were reaching up to heaven through the *Erhabner Geist* of Faust, while its author remained essentially more akin to the Earth-Spirit. In the second half of the century, thinkers like Montégut, professional philosophers like Caro and Délerot, attempt closer interpretations. Two famous critical historians, Renan and Taine, were considerably indebted to Goethe's thought. The former admired in him a peculiar combination of poetry and wisdom; the latter, his unitary conception of the material universe. In both, a trend towards recognizing a divine immanence within the scheme of things has been ascribed, in part, to the effect of Goethe's pantheism.

A little while ago, we parted from *Faust* making its slow way down the century. In 1859, Gounod's opera gave definite consecration, so to speak, to the average French conception of the theme, which always emphasized the sentimental or the diabolical elements. In the meantime the Second Part had appeared and had been variously translated. Evidently the reception of this Part will link with the reception accorded to the Goethean philosophy as above outlined. It was between 1860 and 1870 that the most serious French attempt was made to reach the "arcana" of *Faust* as a whole. Again, literary men are less favorable and less penetrating than the professional philosophers and thinkers. A certain élite discards the operative and other trappings and presses home to the heart of the matter: "Ein guter Mensch, in seinem dunklen Drange. . . ." And even so, each interpreter is inclined to inject into the play a *dunkler Drang* of his own. Thus Amiel, with his anguished strivings; thus Scherer, with his ethical dualism. The decade as a whole may overemphasize the pantheistic rather than the social bearings of *Faust*. Yet Taine and Victor de Laprade, in different ways, certainly apprehend depths within depths.

I must pass over the Parnassian movement in verse with the remark that the works most appreciated by these classically minded

poets were the *Iphigenie*, *Hermann and Dorothea*, and especially the *Bride of Corinth*, which was imitated both by Leconte de Lisle and Anatole France.

About the same period, when scholarly processes were taking a slow hold, the personality of Goethe came to be better known. For after the apotheosis of the romantic era, there had been a slump in his reputation. He had been reproached with indifference to moral and social issues and with an Olympian detachment from humanity. But when documents bearing on his turbulent youth were published and particularly when the many-sidedness of his active interests was disclosed, a very different Goethe stands revealed. Men like Sainte-Beuve and Flaubert express their admiring amazement. "There is a man!" exclaimed the latter, just as Napoleon had exclaimed before him. And in spite of some dissidents, the Goethe of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, the Goethe recorded by Eckermann dawns upon the French as an ardent soul, an apostle of a well-nigh universal culture and discipline. It is a pity that this more comprehensive vision was soon to be darkened by war-clouds.

With some exceptions among the erudite, Goethe suffered a partial eclipse in France during the decade following the Franco-Prussian war. He was viewed as a Man of Iron, too much of a compatriot of Bismarck. But around 1880, there was a revival of his renown and influence; and for fifteen years the new generation of Nietzschean individualists frequently invoked the shade of Goethe to support their own *culte du moi*. Bourget and Bourget's heroes make of him the perfectly developed type of the Olympian superman. Maurice Barrès, in his earlier work, sets up a Goethe after his own image, absorbed in refining his inner sensations. These egoists, says Baldensperger, lose sight of the fact that the mature Goethe knew the value of abnegation, that he was at least as much occupied with *Entsagung* as with *Entwicklung*. Besides this group, we find Daudet enthusiastically steeping himself in the *Conversations* with Eckermann; and Anatole France characteristically declaring that each reader interprets *Faust* according to his own prepossessions—a remark which applies perfectly well to Barrès and his ilk. And it would seem to apply more widely, if we consider the vicissitudes of Goethe's fame in France and the fact that even at one and the same epoch he was the subject of quite

contradictory judgments. Furthermore, statue and pedestal, he was repainted, in the Byzantine manner and very differently, by the romanticists, the moralists, the Parnassians and the egotists. Each nineteenth-century school turned him into a temporal if not a local deity. This could be done *coram populo*, for after all the knowledge of Goethe filtered down to the public mostly through intermediaries. The populace was more attached to the spectacular Gounod than to the clordy vapors arising from the original laboratory of Faust. It has been said that Goethe appealed less to the crowds at the concert-hall than to the adepts at chamber-music. And in contemporary France it seems that he still affects chiefly the élite, though it is an increasing élite.

We can touch only a few high points in the Goethe-wave of the twentieth century. Barrès continues his cult, now considerably broadened, and palpably imitates *Hermann and Dorothea* in his *Colette Baudouche*. The labyrinthine work of Proust contains various references to Goethe, viewed primarily as artist, while Gide rather emphasizes the humanist. Rolland, like Rod before him, has certain moralistic strictures regarding the poet's egotism. A philologist, like Michel Bréal, finds his favorite reading in Goethe and has left some penetrating judgments just published in a recent number of the *Revue de Littérature Comparée*.

In this same number—which is consecrated to Goethe—we discover some interesting data suggesting his present status in France. While just after the Great War, as after 1870, the vogue decreased, once more the pendulum swings upward and now indicates a maximum of interest in Goethe, the "good European," during this centennial period. It is of course to be expected that there should appear many Goethe-studies, popular, biographical, or scholarly. It is also natural that the "lessons" of his life should at present be most in evidence. I refer less to these productions than to the results of a curious experiment undertaken by Professor Hazard.

Taking at random ten books that lay on the reviewer's table, books of essays or biography dealing primarily with French authors, Professor Hazard examined them to see what traces of Goethe he could find. Of the ten, no less than eight at least mentioned Goethe and several dwelt upon him particularly. Apparently, the diverse authors could not satisfactorily portray Balzac, or Huysmans, or Proust, without bringing the great German somehow into

the picture. Surely this is symptomatic of more than a passing interest: it is a full recognition in France of Goethe's eminent and enduring place in modern world-literature. These authors discuss him from many angles: they call him the "greatest representative of the German spirit," or "the supreme critic of all time"—a rank which Sainte-Beuve himself generously conferred upon Goethe. He is now admired chiefly, concludes Professor Hazard, for his sense of order and the sane equilibrium of his marvellous mind. With regard to that mind, the final word may be left to the subtle pen of Anatole France. In his *Opinions sociales*, France is contemplating the end of the world and the extinction of the race. In the gradual disappearance of mankind, will its last representatives stand at a peak of development? Anatole shakes his head and declares: "There is a very small chance that the last man of all will be as intelligent as Goethe was."

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